Key Directions for the Sustainable Development of Ukraine's Healthcare System under Martial Law

Sustainable development as a framework for wartime health policy

Maryna Martynenko, DSc (Economics), Professor,
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

Olena Nifatova, DSc (Economics), Distinguished Professor,
University of Barcelona



Healthcare system

Key directions

Wartime response and sustainable development must proceed together

PROBLEM

- Military attacks disrupt facilities, personnel, supply chains and continuity of care.
- Short-term crisis response can crowd out investment in long-term resilience.
- Reconstruction may reproduce earlier vulnerabilities unless sustainability guides decisions now.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To establish how the ten previously identified directions of economic provision of health system support the Sustainable Development Goals and to explain why they remain relevant under martial law.

Core premise	Emergency response, recovery and system development require one policy framework.

Source: authors' conceptual framework based on the UN 2030 Agenda

The health system faces sustained pressure across access, capacity and infrastructure

3,000+

WHO-verified attacks on health care since February 2022

9.2M

people require health assistance

US$23.6B

health-sector recovery needs over ten years

72%

reported anxiety or depression during the previous year

4 in 5

reported difficulty accessing needed medicines

Policy implication

Current health needs and long-term reconstruction needs must be addressed in parallel.

Sustainable development reduces the risk of rebuilding a fragmented and vulnerable system.

Sources: WHO, 23 February and 8 May 2026; United Nations health assistance estimate; RDNA5, 2026

The 17 SDGs provide a shared global framework



1 No Poverty
End poverty in all its forms.

2 Zero Hunger
End hunger and improve nutrition.

3 Good Health and Well-being
Ensure healthy lives and well-being.

4 Quality Education
Ensure inclusive and equitable education.

5 Gender Equality
Empower all women and girls.

6 Clean Water and Sanitation
Ensure safe water and sanitation.

7 Affordable and Clean Energy
Expand access to sustainable energy.

8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
Promote decent work and inclusive growth.

9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Build resilient infrastructure and innovation.

10 Reduced Inequalities
Reduce inequality within and among countries.

11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
Make settlements inclusive, safe and resilient.

12 Responsible Consumption and Production
Use resources responsibly and reduce waste.

13 Climate Action
Act on climate change and its impacts.

14 Life Below Water
Protect oceans and marine resources.

15 Life on Land
Protect ecosystems and biodiversity.

16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Promote peace, justice and accountable institutions.

17 Partnerships for the Goals
Strengthen cooperation and implementation.

Source: United Nations, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Previously identified directions form the basis for the SDG mapping

01	Emergency and trauma healthcare	3, 11
02	Primary care	3, 10
03	Mental health	3, 10
04	Infectious disease detection and outbreak prevention	3, 6
05	Access to medicines	3, 10
06	Human capital	3, 4, 8
07	Medical logistics and equipment	9, 3
08	Volunteer, community and stakeholder engagement	16, 17
09	Digitalisation of healthcare	9, 17
10	**Health system preparedness and resilience**	3, 11, 16, 17

Source: ten priority directions identified in the authors' previous study; SDG mapping developed for this presentation

01 Emergency and trauma healthcare

A functioning trauma pathway protects lives and preserves access during repeated shocks.

LINKED GOALS

3 SDG 3

11 SDG 11

Targets 3.d and 11.b

Emergency care strengthens national capacity to manage health risks. Resilient cities and communities require emergency services that continue operating during attacks and infrastructure failure.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Maintain patient routing and medical evacuation.
- Secure blood supply and trauma capacity.
- Link acute care with early rehabilitation.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Time to definitive trauma care and continuity of emergency services

SDG links: UN Targets 3.d and 11.b; wartime priorities based on WHO guidance

02 Primary care

Primary care protects universal access when population mobility and territorial disparities increase.

LINKED GOALS

3 SDG 3

10 SDG 10

Target 3.8 and Goal 10

Universal health coverage depends on accessible first-contact care. Primary care also reduces inequality by reaching displaced people and residents of frontline, rural and remote communities.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Adapt services to displaced and mobile populations.
- Use outreach and mobile models in underserved areas.
- Protect continuity for chronic conditions.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Primary care coverage and unmet need by region and population group

SDG links: UN Target 3.8 and Goal 10; authors' synthesis

03 Mental health

Mental health services support individual recovery, workforce capacity and social resilience.

LINKED GOALS

3 SDG 3

10 SDG 10

Target 3.4 and Goal 10

Target 3.4 includes mental health and well-being. Equitable access matters because exposure and service availability differ across veterans, children, displaced people and frontline communities.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Integrate mental health support into primary care.
- Expand community-based and trauma-informed services.
- Support healthcare workers and other high-risk groups.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Share of people with identified needs who receive appropriate support

SDG links: UN Target 3.4 and Goal 10; WHO mental health evidence for Ukraine

04 Infectious disease detection and outbreak prevention

War-related displacement and infrastructure damage increase outbreak risks.

LINKED GOALS

3 SDG 3

6 SDG 6

Targets 3.3, 3.d and Goal 6

Disease control relies on surveillance, laboratory capacity and preparedness. Safe water and sanitation reduce transmission risks when utilities and housing are damaged.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Maintain surveillance and laboratory diagnostics.
- Protect routine immunisation coverage.
- Coordinate water safety and antimicrobial resistance control.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Vaccination coverage and time from signal detection to response

SDG links: UN Targets 3.3, 3.d and Goal 6; authors' synthesis

05 Access to medicines

Affordable medicines are essential for universal coverage and continuity of treatment.

LINKED GOALS



SDG 3 SDG 10

Targets 3.8 and 3.b

The SDGs call for financial protection and access to essential medicines and vaccines. Wartime supply interruptions and high prices intensify existing access inequalities.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Protect reimbursement and affordability mechanisms.
- Stabilise procurement and strategic reserves.
- Secure last-mile delivery to frontline communities.

MEASURE PROGRESS **Medicine stock-out days and household out-of-pocket burden**

SDG links: UN Targets 3.8 and 3.b; WHO access evidence for Ukraine

06 Human capital

Health system resilience depends on a protected, skilled and geographically available workforce.

LINKED GOALS



Target 3.c, Goals 4 and 8

Target 3.c covers health financing and workforce development. Quality education builds required competencies, while decent work supports retention, safety and sustainable performance.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Expand relevant training and continuing development.
- Improve safety, remuneration and psychosocial support.
- Address shortages and uneven territorial distribution.

MEASURE PROGRESS **Health worker density, vacancies and retention by oblast**

SDG links: UN Target 3.c, Goals 4 and 8; authors' synthesis

07 Medical logistics and equipment

Resilient supply chains keep services operating when transport, energy and storage systems fail.

LINKED GOALS

9 SDG 9

3 SDG 3

Goal 9 and Target 3.8

Reliable infrastructure supports continuity of essential services. Logistics and equipment determine whether universal health coverage remains operational during repeated disruptions.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Diversify suppliers and transport routes.
- Develop regional reserves and transparent inventory systems.
- Provide autonomous energy for critical facilities.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Delivery continuity, reserve coverage and critical equipment availability

SDG links: UN Goal 9 and Target 3.8; wartime priorities based on WHO evidence

08 Volunteer, community and stakeholder engagement

Coordinated participation expands capacity and improves the territorial fit of assistance.

LINKED GOALS

16 SDG 16

17 SDG 17

Goals 16 and 17

Inclusive institutions involve communities in decisions that affect access. Partnerships mobilise resources and expertise, but coordination is required to prevent duplication and geographic gaps.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Align partner activity with national and regional plans.
- Include community evidence in priority setting.
- Use common data and accountability standards.

MEASURE PROGRESS **Unmet needs, duplicated assistance and partner coverage by territory**

SDG links: UN Goals 16 and 17; authors' synthesis

09 Digitalisation of healthcare

Digital continuity supports care for mobile populations and improves resource visibility.

LINKED GOALS



SDG 9 SDG 17

Goal 9 and Target 17.18

Digital infrastructure supports innovation and service continuity. Target 17.18 emphasises timely, reliable and disaggregated data for evidence-based decisions.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Maintain interoperable electronic health records.
- Expand telemedicine where physical access is limited.
- Protect cybersecurity, privacy and digital inclusion.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Interoperable record coverage and continuity during infrastructure disruption

SDG links: UN Goal 9 and Target 17.18; authors' synthesis

10 Health system preparedness and resilience

Preparedness integrates emergency response, recovery and long-term system development.

LINKED GOALS

3 SDG 3

11 SDG 11

16 SDG 16

17 SDG 17

Target 3.d and Goals 11, 16 and 17

Resilience connects risk management, strong institutions, community safety and partnerships. Recovery should reduce earlier vulnerabilities through the build back better approach.

WARTIME PRIORITIES

- Use risk-based planning and continuity protocols.
- Build autonomous and adaptable infrastructure.
- Coordinate recovery finance around measurable outcomes.

MEASURE PROGRESS

Time to restore essential services after disruption

Sources: UN SDGs; RDNA5, 2026; Government of Ukraine–UN Cooperation Framework 2025–2029

CONCLUSIONS

The SDGs provide a common framework for wartime decisions and long-term recovery

01 The ten directions translate broad sustainability commitments into health system priorities.

02 Emergency response and long-term development must advance in parallel.

03 Equity, continuity and resilience should guide financing and reconstruction choices.

04 Progress requires measurable outcomes and coordination across government, communities and partners.

Thank you · Questions and discussion